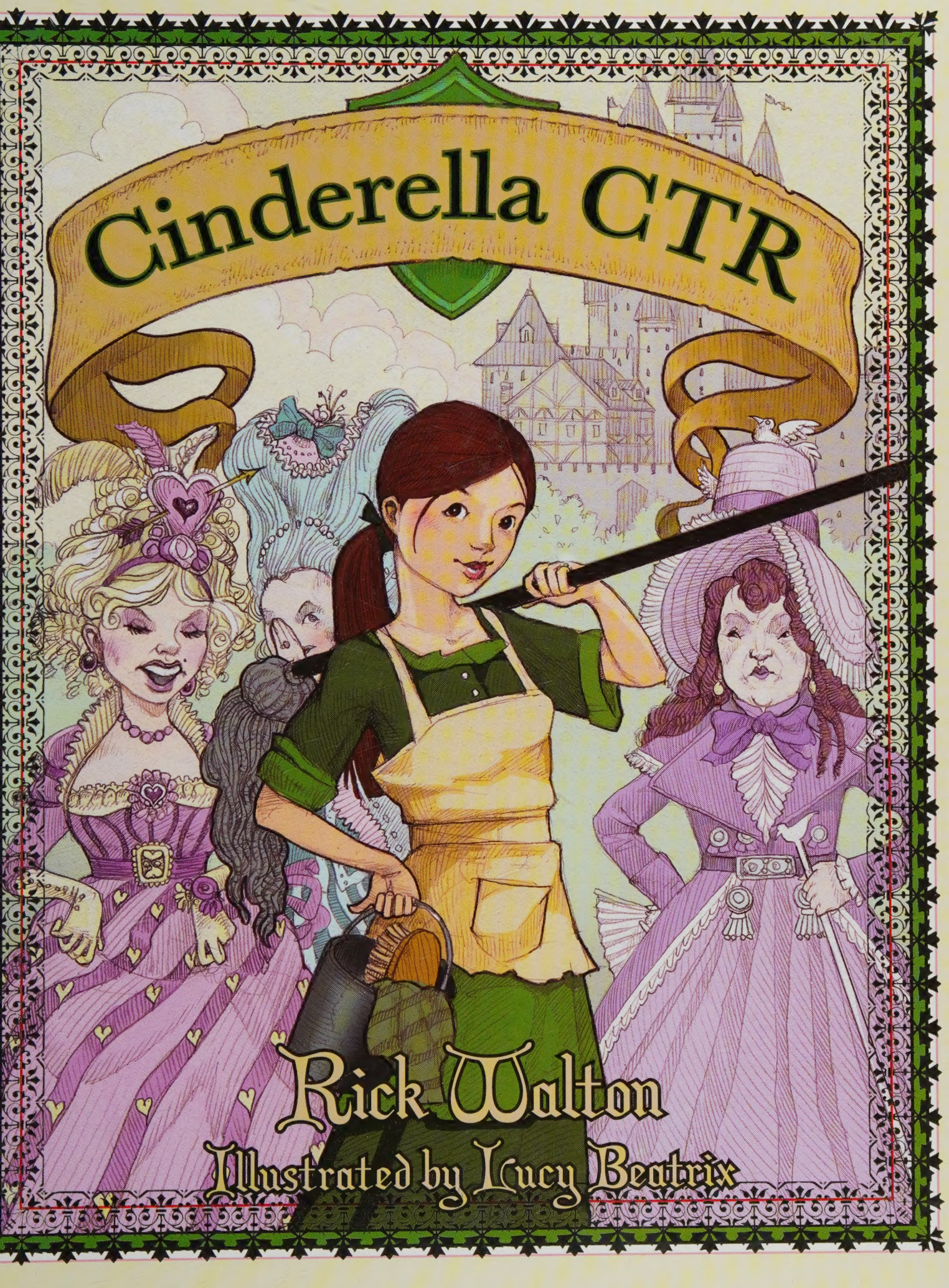
Cinderella CTR
Rick Walton
Illustrated by Lucy Beatrix

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W.T.S.

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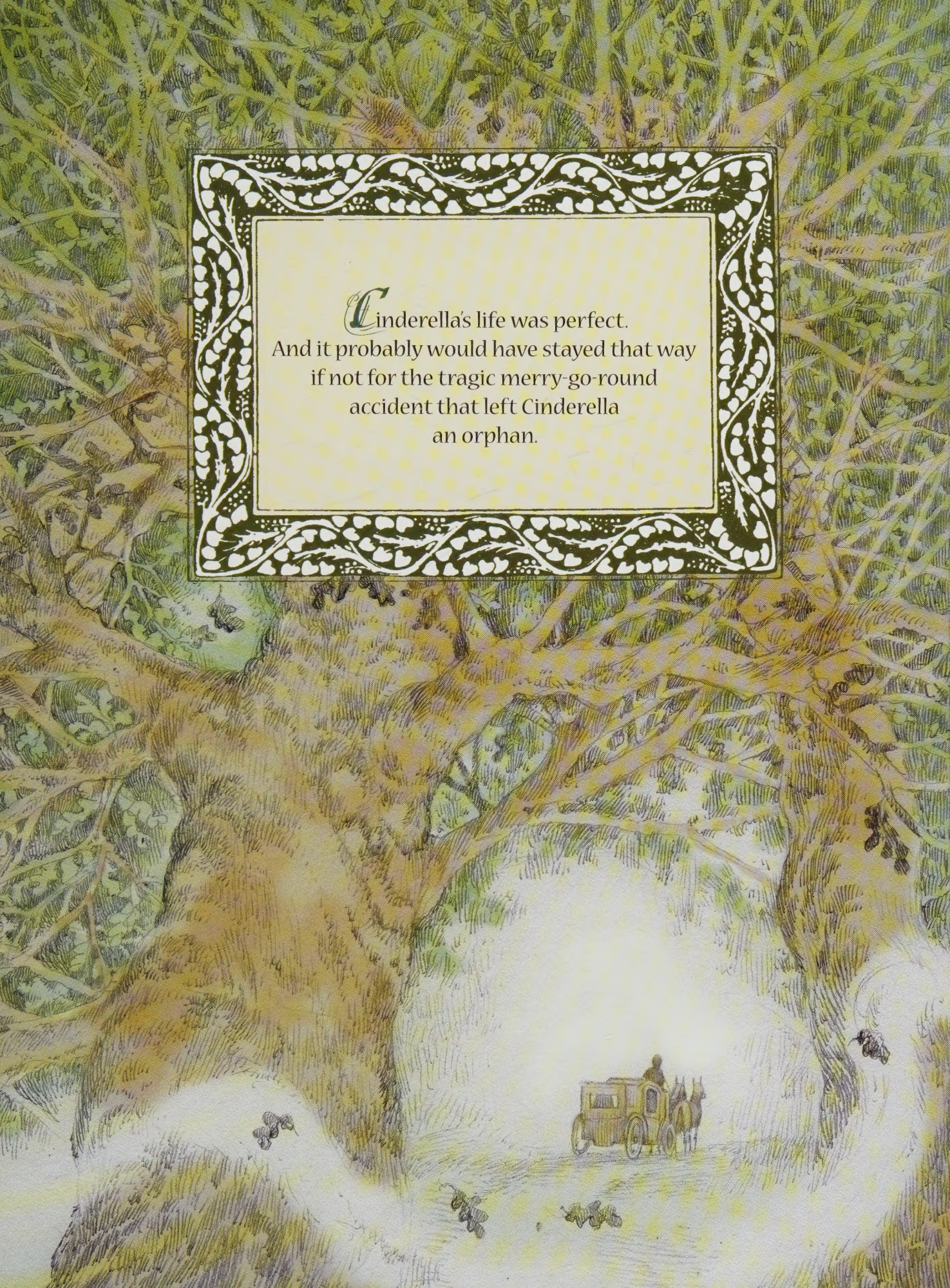
To Peter and Nichole Ivie,
who chose right.
And to Jessica—R.W.

For my hard-working
mom—L.B.

Cinderella's father was ward librarian.
He was the best. The ward library was a model of organization and inspiration.

Her mother was the compassionate service leader.
She would often show up at your door with a hug, a kind word, and dinner even before you needed help.

But their greatest effort was poured into loving and nurturing their only daughter, Cinderella.


Cinderella's life was perfect.
And it probably would have stayed that way
if not for the tragic merry-go-round
accident that left Cinderella
an orphan.

Cinderella's only relative, Lilburna, her father's half-third cousin once removed, lived in a far-off land with her two daughters. And that's where Cinderella went to live.

She was not allowed to take anything of her own with her. But no one noticed the CTR ring on her little finger—the ring her parents had given her on her eighth birthday.

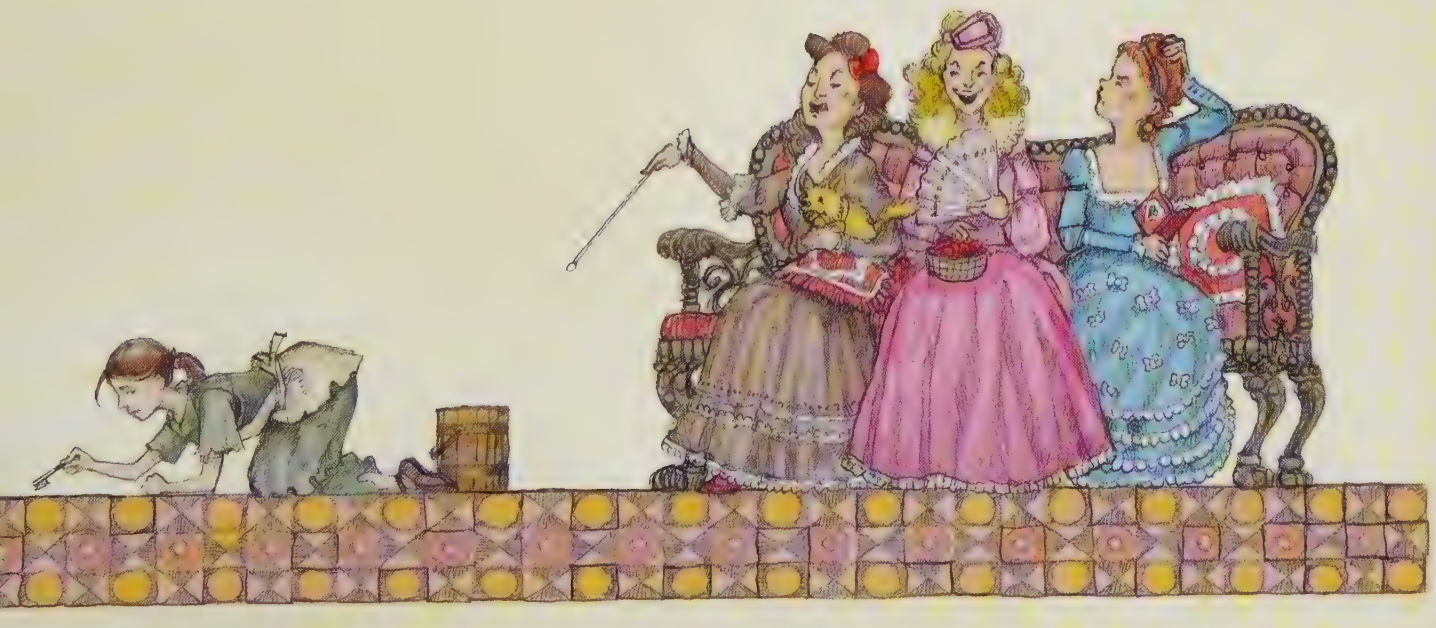
Cinderella's life with her father's distant cousin was not perfect. Lilburna and her daughters, Boggsy and Wyclia, were horrible to her.

They made her clean the cellar floors with her toothbrush.

They made her scrub the iron pots and pans until they shone like silver.

They made her listen to and applaud their cat-frightening singing.

But Cinderella did not complain. Her parents had taught her to do her best, no matter what the situation, and that all would be well in the end. When she was tempted to rebel, she would look at that little ring on her finger, remember her parents' advice, and get back to work.



One day there was a pounding on the door. When Boggsy opened it, she was stunned to see a messenger from the king. She squealed and fainted. Wyclia came running, and when she saw the messenger, she, too, squealed and fainted. Finally Lilburna arrived to take the message. And when she read the invitation handed to her by the messenger, she, too, squealed and fainted.

And that's where Cinderella found them.

"I should wake them up," she said, "but they look so peaceful."

She noticed the letter. She had been taught not to read other people's mail, but the letter was addressed to the young ladies of the household. She was a young lady of the household.

She picked it up and read it.

"A ball? Meet the prince?" Cinderella imagined herself dancing, and she smiled.

"Hey! Give that to me!" Lilburna snatched the invitation out of Cinderella's hand.

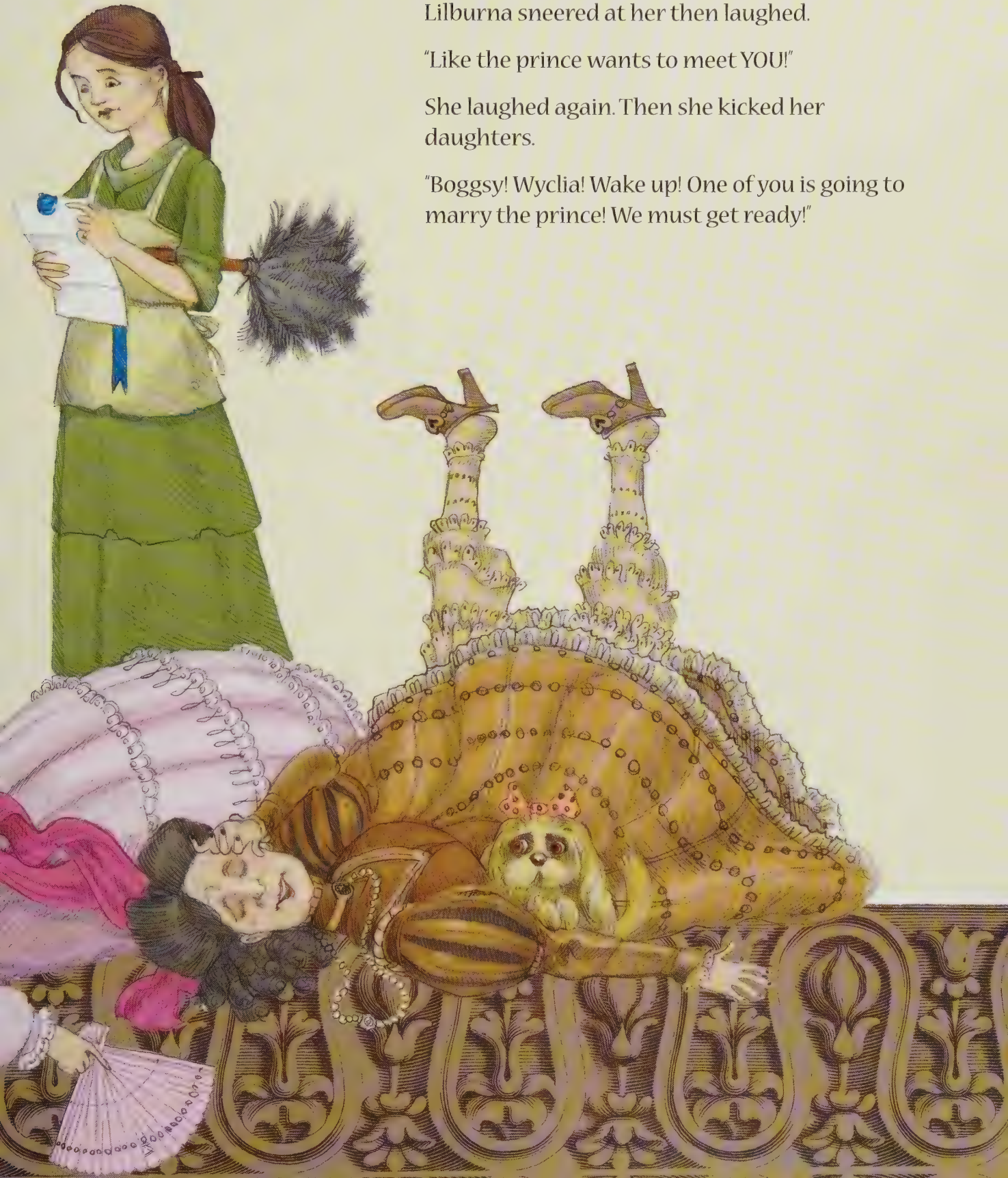
"The ball will be fun," Cinderella said carefully.

Lilburna sneered at her then laughed.

"Like the prince wants to meet YOU!"

She laughed again. Then she kicked her daughters.

"Boggsy! Wyclia! Wake up! One of you is going to marry the prince! We must get ready!"



The next several days were a flurry of preparations.

Ball gowns were made,
with Cinderella doing most of the sewing.
Knots and snags were worked out of hair,
with Cinderella doing most of the brushing.
Makeup was applied,
with Cinderella doing most of the painting.

"More! More!" the girls screamed.

But every time Cinderella even hinted that she might like to go to the ball, Lilburna just laughed.

"You? At the palace? Why, the very thought!"

But Lilburna never did exactly say that Cinderella couldn't go. And so in the quiet of the night, while her cousins snored loudly, Cinderella prepared.

On the night of the ball, Cinderella helped her cousins into their gowns, globbed on one last round of makeup, and waved as they climbed into their carriage and headed for the palace.

And then Cinderella reached into a seldom-used pot in a seldom-used closet and pulled out a most beautiful dress. She had pieced it together out of dish towels and old curtains using skills she had gained in her Young Women classes.

She put it on, brushed her hair, touched herself lightly with makeup, and headed off.

It was some distance to the palace, and Cinderella sang as she walked and walked and walked and walked. She was just happy to get out of the house. It had been a long time.

Cinderella hesitated when she reached the palace. She had never been in any place so grand. The lights were bright, the music flowed, and laughter rang through the night. Cinderella took a deep breath then marched through the palace door.

On the dance floor, Prince Harold XII noticed a motion out of the corner of his eye. He welcomed any reason to get away from the chatterbox who held him captive. He turned and looked.

She glowed. And that smile, so pure. And that dress, so simple, so modest, and yet so elegant. Prince Harold XII plowed through the crowd until he stood before Cinderella. He held out his hand. "May I have this dance?" he asked. She smiled at him. He melted. She took his hand.

And they danced.

At first they did not speak.
They just stared into each other's eyes.

And then the prince asked,
"Where did you come from?
Heaven?"

"We all did,"
Cinderella said.

They danced some more. And then the prince held up Cinderella's hand and said, "This ring. It's unusual. CTR? What does it mean?"

Cinderella stopped dancing. No one in this country had ever even noticed her ring. She remembered her father putting it on her finger. For a moment she was sad, missing her parents. And then she smiled at the prince and whispered something in his ear.

The prince smiled, looked at the ring, and said, "I will."

They danced and danced, all the time staring into each other's eyes. It was almost as if time had stopped, but unfortunately it hadn't.

When the clock struck eleven, Cinderella awoke from her trance. She remembered something her father had told her. "The Spirit goes to bed at midnight." She did a quick calculation and realized that if she ran, she could be home by then.

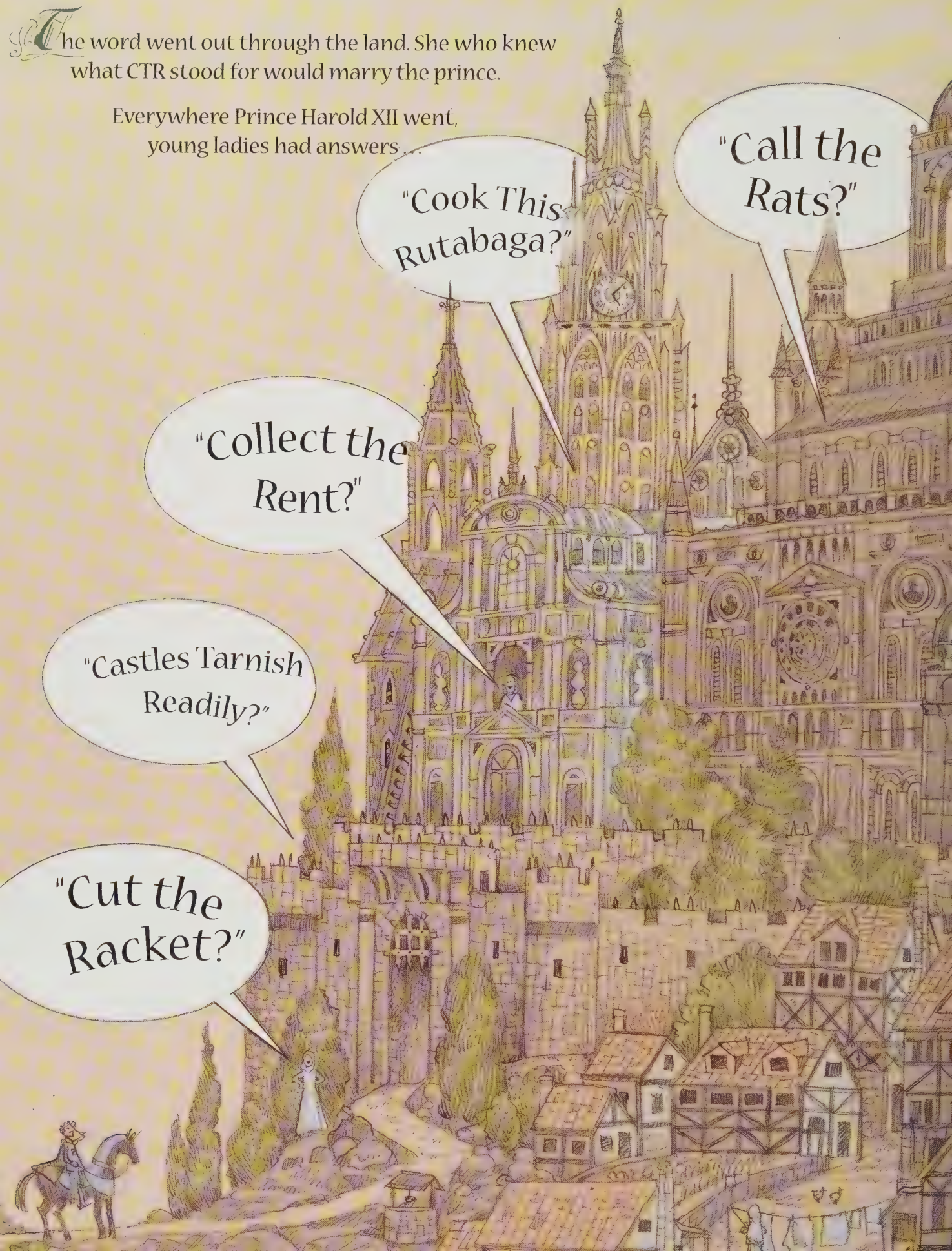
She smiled at the prince and said, "It was so nice to meet you. It really, really was. But I've gotta go. Bye!" And she raced out of the palace.

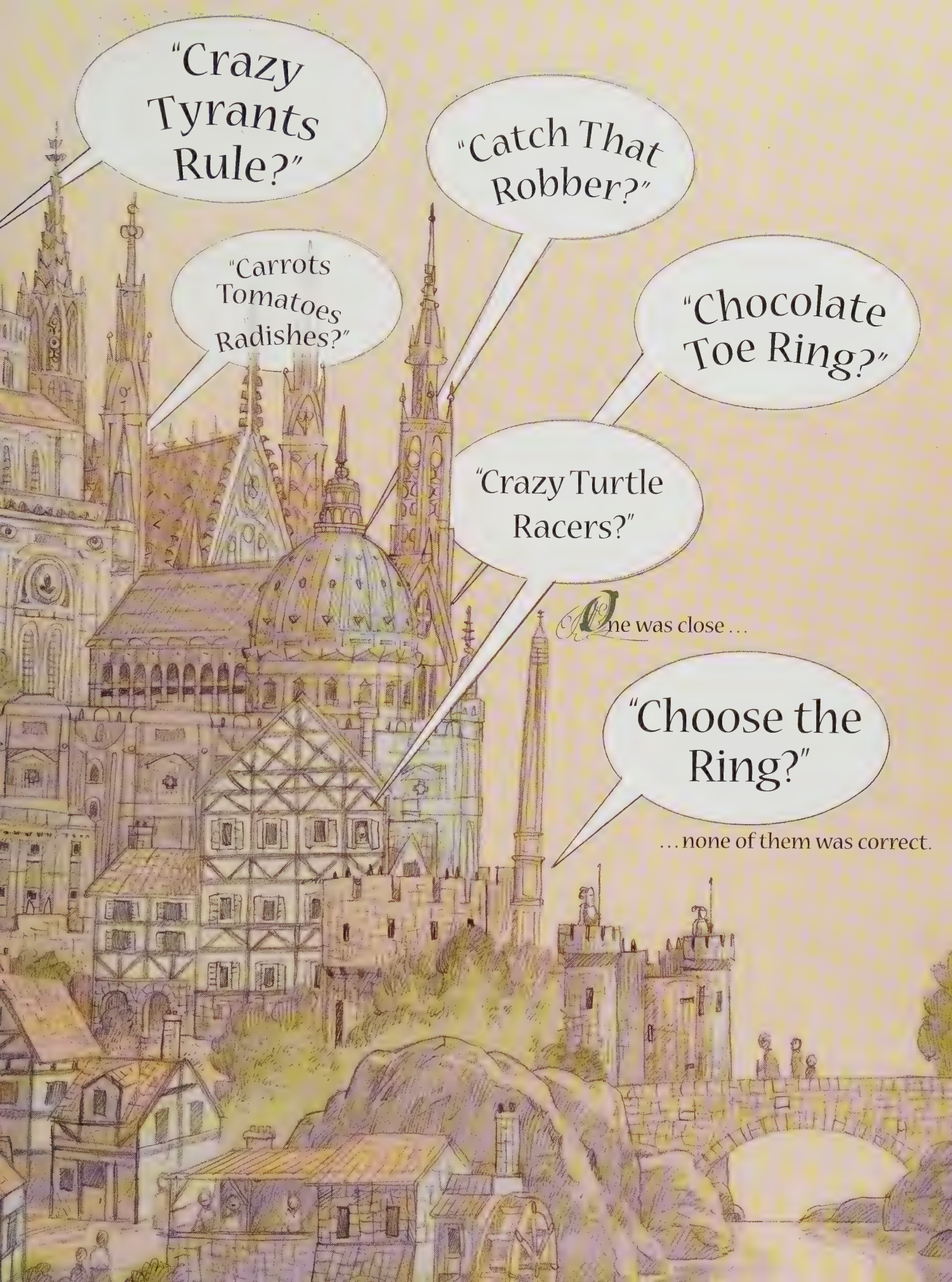
The prince stood stunned. And then he shouted, "Who was that girl?" He had been so enchanted that he'd forgotten to ask her name. "Guards! After her!" But Cinderella could run and not be weary, and the guards could not.

Neither Cinderella nor the prince slept that night, and in the morning the prince made a decision. He would find her. But how? And then he remembered something she had told him.

The word went out through the land. She who knew what CTR stood for would marry the prince.

Everywhere Prince Harold XII went, young ladies had answers . . .




"Crazy Tyrants Rule?"
"Catch That Robber?"
"Carrots Tomatoes Radishes?"
"Chocolate Toe Ring?"
"Crazy Turtle Racers?"
One was close . . .
"Choose the Ring?"
. . . none of them was correct.

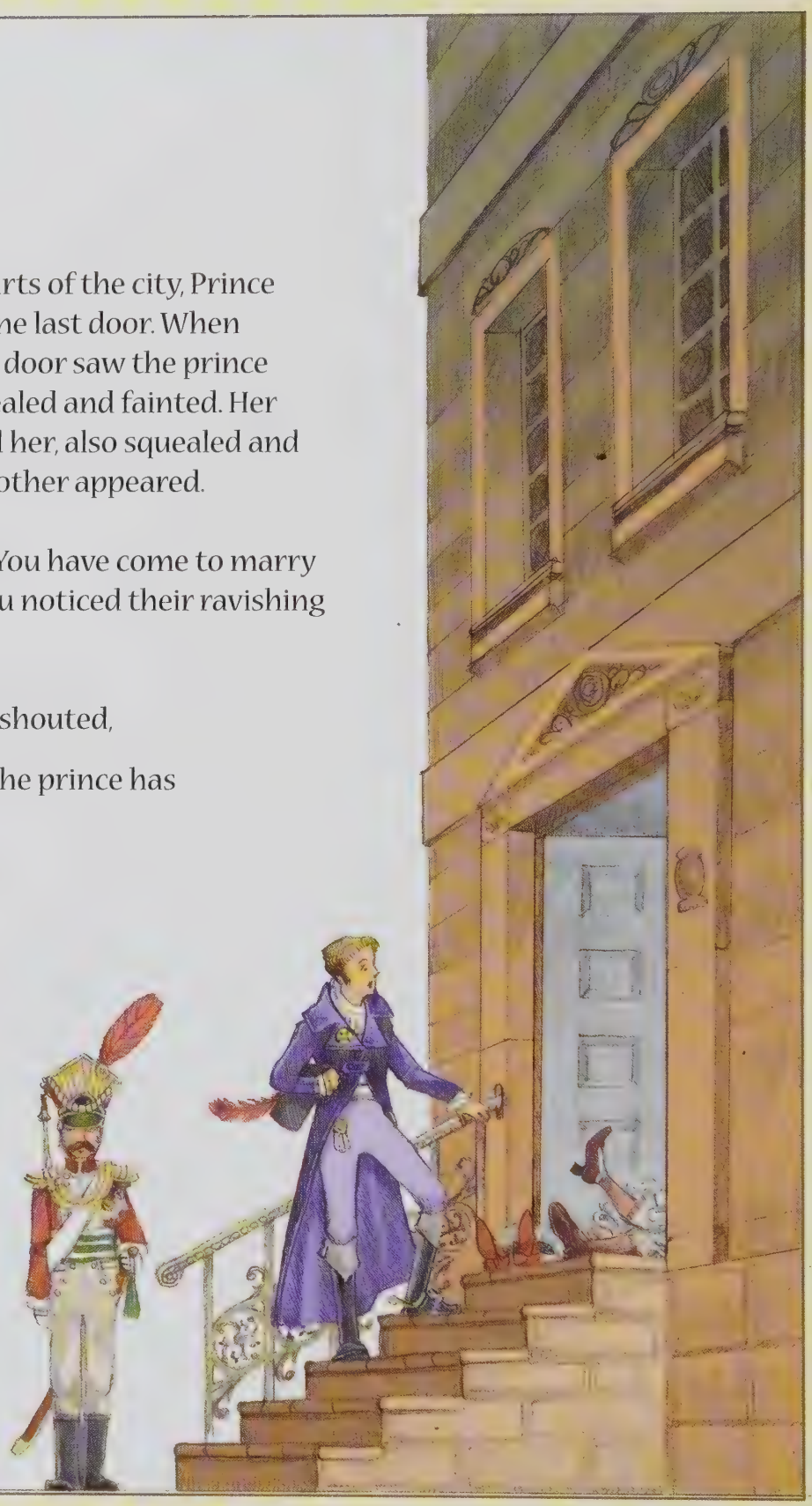
At last, on the outskirts of the city, Prince Harold XII knocked on one last door. When the girl who opened the door saw the prince standing there, she squealed and fainted. Her sister, coming up behind her, also squealed and fainted. And then the mother appeared.

"Well, hellooooo, prince! You have come to marry one of my daughters! You noticed their ravishing beauty at the ball!"

She kicked the girls and shouted,

"Boggsy, Wyclia, get up! The prince has come to marry you!"

The two girls struggled to their feet.



The prince was pretty sure that neither of these girls was his mystery woman, but he asked his question anyway.

"Can you tell me the meaning of the letters CTR?"

The girls thought for a moment and then . . .

"Catch That Rhinoceros!" said Boggsy.

"Cats Taste Rotten!" said Wyclia.

"Enough of this game playing," said Lilburna.
"Which of my daughters will be queen?"
"I'm afraid neither of them," said the prince with relief.
"And I'm sorry, but I must be going."

He wasn't sorry.
He turned to leave, and then something made him stop. A question came into his mind. He turned back and asked,
"Are there any other young ladies in this household?"

"Oh, no," said Lilburna.
"No, no, no," said Boggsy.
"Not a chance," said Wyclia.

Crash, clang, clatter
went something in the kitchen.
The prince rushed through the kitchen door.

There she stood, amidst a fallen pile of iron pots that shone like silver.
But he had to make sure.
Slowly, carefully, he asked the question.

"Tell me, what does CTR mean?"

"Choose the Right," she said.

He grabbed her in his arms.
"Tell me, before you get away again, what is your name?"

"Cinderella," she whispered.

"Cinderella, what a beautiful name. Cinderella."
And then he announced to three stunned women and to several happy guards,
"Cinderella, will you marry me and be my queen?"

Cinderella pulled away. "Whoa!" she said. "We've just met!"

The prince looked stunned. "Well . . . then . . . we'll date!"
"You'll have me home by twelve?" asked Cinderella.
"Anything you ask. And after we know each other well, we'll marry
in the grandest ceremony this nation has ever seen!"

"I can't do that," said Cinderella sadly.

The prince was doubly stunned.
"But . . . why? Why? I love you already,
and I know you will learn to love me."

Cinderella looked at her ring and then explained to the prince the kind of man she planned to marry and where she would marry him.

The prince was crestfallen. He was not that man. The palace was not that place. But then he smiled. "May I at least take you out for pizza and a movie?"

"I would like that," said Cinderella.

And they had a very good time.

But did they live happily ever after?

Well, let's just say that
Cinderella did become
queen.
And the prince became the
second-best
ward librarian
ever.

Cinderella Turns Royal

Poor Cinderella!

Sent to a place where no one even knows what "CTR" means, and forced to do awful chores! Her horrible cousins may try to stop her, but Cinderella has her eye on the royal ball.

With hard work and a few tricks she learned in Young Womens class, she just might make it...

...but will the prince choose the right?

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